

The Scientific Research Paper and its Discontents

Raghavendra Gadagkar

Centre for Ecological Sciences & Centre for Contemporary Studies

Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, 560012, India

President, Indian National Science Academy, Delhi

Email: ragh@ces.iisc.ernet.in

URL: <http://ces.iisc.ac.in/new/>

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Raghavendra_Gadagkar

The importance of the scientific research paper as the prime mode of communication in the sciences has grown steadily since the birth of the French *Journal des sçavans* and the English *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* in 1665. Today there are thousands of journals publishing millions of papers. But there have been surprisingly few significant changes in the paper publishing enterprise in 350 years. This stasis has led to the accumulation of so many major faults that the very idea of the scientific paper is under threat. In the last decade however there have been major changes owing to digital technology and the internet. Not all of these changes are poised to solve old problems and rescue the scientific paper. Indeed some of the new realities of electronic publishing might actually serve as the proverbial last straw on the camel's back and drive the scientific paper/journal to extinction. In this talk I will discuss some of the problems, both old and new, and especially the causes and consequences of open access, and attempt to offer some ideas for a way forward.